

# On the Vagaries of Time

**Wandering through the back pages of my life, I recall a treasured memory. The following is my best attempt at re-imagining what happened, or at least what I believe happened. You be the judge.**

Trigger Warning: Occasional Drug References

**The events described herein took place nearly a half-century ago. At the time I was employed by a CBS-TV affiliate in Northeastern Minnesota, earning \$1.65 an hour. The studio was located hard by the shores of icy Lake Superior in Duluth.**

**I'd been hired as a Director by the Production department. The job was not prestigious. Nor did it pay particularly well. But for me, being a director was exhilarating, comparable to conducting an electronic orchestra in the midst of a swirling storm. Intoxicating!**

**The prime directive? to regularly orchestrate an error-free broadcast. To meet this standard required focus, visual sense and the ability to remain calm under constant deadline pressure.**

**Simultaneously, a director must be sensitive to the needs of the News department, particularly the anchors, a testy bunch with immense egos. News is a rapidly shifting exercise, cramming the efforts of talented, often agitated people into a split second time frame. Newsrooms are as emotionally volatile as the stories they cover. This made for stimulating interactions.**



**In addition to hand-holding duties and command function, the director presents all elements of the broadcast using a complex video switcher filled with dozens of buttons. Buttons are pushed in a particular order insuring the viewer is bathed in a buttery-smooth presentation.**



**Switching errors are obvious to the viewer, lounging in their Lay-Z-Boy. Switching mistakes distract and annoy the viewer. On-air mistakes lead to lower opinion of the News product. And, make no mistake...the News is a very real, very profitable TV product. Poorly crafted programs drive viewers to the competition. Ratings suffer, leading to diminishing advertising revenue. Lost dollars equal lost jobs - a dismal cascading effect.**



**In 1972, I chose to be blissfully unaware of the possible downside. I was attracted to the fast pace, addicted to the pressure, feasting on it with gusto.**

**I was also a creature of that era. As a young man of 23, I was fully engaged in the experimental nature of the day. My interests included pastimes commonly associated with the youth culture.**



**Living communally on a "farm" with a like-minded gaggle of Near-Hippies, we partook in the degeneracy of the times. This included the use of mind-bending drugs. LSD was at the apex of the pharmacological pyramid. Its use was sacramental. We were worshipful, dutiful acolytes.**



**Dropping acid was normally reserved for days when one could be certain of eight to 12 hours of uninterrupted leisure time. This was necessary because LSD's stunning effects would last that long. Day-to-day activity was challenging under the influence of acid. If one were being the tiniest bit prudent, one usually waited for the weekend to tune-in and turn on.**





On a particular Saturday night, I was to direct the 10PM News with Duke Skorich, a native of the notorious Iron Range. Skorich, a colorful character in his own right, was similarly involved in chemical adventurism, but that's another story for another day.

## At the Candy Store

Sometime prior to the night in question, my friends and I scored 20 doses of multi-colored LSD from a dealing buddy of ours. A long-haired giant, he'd been a bouncer for the Rolling Stones and had great connections. As he poured the tablets from a baggie, an orange pill, larger than the others, came to rest in his cupped hand.

"See this orange one?" he said reverently.

"That's a 4-way. Split it into 4 parts. You only need a quarter of this shit to blow your fuckin' mind."

"Oh...Wow man!" I responded thoughtfully.

It's not clear the potency message sunk in. Undoubtedly, we were already under the influence of something. Nevertheless, despite our failure to perform due diligence, the illicit purchase concluded. We were mostly interested in actual field trials. With the deal complete, we were stocked-up and ready for the journey.

## The Plot Starts to Thicken

In 1972, possession of the LSD we'd scored was a felony, punishable by several years hard time in an Uncle Sam slam upon conviction. Realizing how legally precarious our position was, I had already devised what I thought was a bullet proof ruse to protect my friends and I from that eventuality.



I would tuck the stash in a freezer in the kitchen in the TV studio. Wrapped in foil, tucked into the bottom of the freezer's bottom shelf, the pills were secure behind leftover frozen meat used in food segments served-up on the Town & Country with Kathy Linde talk show. Rarely examined, the hideout served my purpose well.

Anyone familiar with LSD knows it can take up to a half hour before the drug kicks-in. The early phase of acid intoxication is manageable: not so powerful as to make normal activity difficult. As a rule, initial effects amount to mostly giggling.

It was with this understanding that I went into the studio kitchen before the broadcast, retrieving the goods from the chilly Frigidaire. There was a party after the News. It was essential I attend the soiree in the correct state of consciousness.

Twisting the cap off, I poured the colorful tabs into my hand. Without looking, I singled out a pill and swallowed it. The dose was orange.

The Saturday News was a 15-minute show in those days. I was not overly concerned about the timing of the acid run-up.

But, by the time the Newscast was into the commercial break, sponsored by *St. Louis County Federal Savings and Loan*, the acid was rocketing me well beyond the manageable stage of my trip. I was now fully engaged in my journey, with no way to back out.

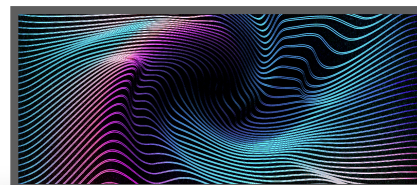


## Things Get Weird

One of the more interesting phenomena associated with LSD is time dilation. Acid turns time into a meaningless abstract. Moments grind to a halt. A minute seems an hour. Fifteen minutes might as well be a week.



In an exercise where timing and precision is pivotal, the time distortion effect is overwhelming.







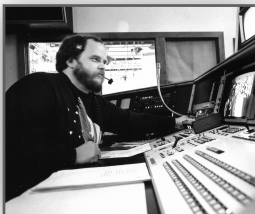
One example: videotape machines of that era took 6-seconds for the picture to lock-up solidly. The director had to push the Play button to start the videotape machine

rolling 6 seconds before the anchor finished his introduction to the story. Under acid's spell, a six second preroll seemed nonsensical.



The words on the script in front of me were dancing, shifting, swirling and changing color. I had to guess as best I could about when to push the play button

by watching the anchorman's wildly gyrating lips and kaleidoscopic eyes on the monitor in front me.



The color monitors shape shifted. The multiple rows of yellow, green and white buttons twinkled, dancing in time with the anchorman's

baritone voice which seemed to emanate from a distant universe.



The Producer sitting near me smoked a Lucky Strike, cursing into his headset, each word

flowing from his mouth like so much multi-colored toothpaste.

Once I pushed the tape machine Play button, I had to wait for 6-seconds as the anchorman read his intro ... and then push the appropriate switcher button to put the story on line. The anchorman kept reading. The videotape machine kept rolling. It was taking forever.

The rest of the broadcast proceeded in a similar fashion. The time dilation effect grew more pronounced. I looked over at the Producer, a cursing, menacing creature. His face melted and re-formed. He was agitated because...something about the show. A fountain of colorful bile cascaded from his rubbery lips.

With each passing moment, the acid intensified. Thankfully, I'd directed hundreds of News programs. Familiarity allowed me to finish the broadcast without any garish errors.

The viewer saw a typical News show. The Producer got us out on-time. I made my way outside, into a waiting car filled with friends who'd also dropped acid that evening. Incapable of doing much else, we laughed uproariously at the absurdity.



My takeaway from this colorful experience? One ought pay close attention to what one

ingests. I never repeated this same exploit again, but I now view the incident as an enjoyable piece of my time on the planet. I would not, however, recommend it for the faint of heart.

